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September 4, 1964

Sir Macfarlane Burnet  
Director  
Walter & Eliza Hall Institute of Medical Research  
Clinical Research Unit  
The Royal Melbourne Hospital  
Melbourne, Australia

Dear Mac:

I was glad to hear from you in your letter of 20 August.

It is hard for me to think of anyone more suitable as your successor at the Hall Institute than Gus Nossal. It would be futile to try to find someone who could in any sense replace the present incumbent, and I do not believe that any wise administration would attempt to apply such a standard. Rather, I would view the problem as the assessment of the qualifications needed to guide the INstitute over the next few decades of medical research, over a period when complexities of management and methodology will play an increasing role, and one virtually as important as inherent scientific wisdom. Fortunately, I believe, Dr. Nossal qualifies in an outstanding way on all of these counts. We had happy cause to know his effectiveness in getting things done in sometimes difficult circumstances, and he is both deeply motivated and very highly qualified for creative work in his scientific specialty. Perhaps the simplest testimony to his reputation in the United States is that I know that he has been eagerly sought after for any number of significant appointments, including the direction of departments at the most outstanding institutions. Gus is very well known on the American scene, having made a deep impression during his visit here, and this in itself should not be disregarded as one of his assets as a candidate director for the Institute. Having had the good fortune to work directly with Gus during my own visit to Melbourne, I know that he has a deep affection and sense of responsibility to his colleagues in Australian science, and I can only give the strongest support for whatever such an external comment may be worth for his qualifications for the post.

With best personal regards,

Sincerely yours,

Joshua Lederberg  
Professor of Genetics